

Township of Esquimalt Municipal Hall COVID-19 Safety Plan

March 11, 2022

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Township of Esquimalt (The Township) has followed recommendations issued by the Public Health Officer (PHO) and WorkSafeBC in order to ensure the safety of our staff and residents, while ensuring that all essential services have continued. Some of these steps have included:

- Throughout the pandemic the Municipal Hall has moved from initial closure of the hall to reduced hours open to the public, based on information provided by the PHO. Effective February 23, 2022 the Municipal Hall will be open for business Monday to Friday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm;
- Implementation of processes to allow staff to work from home;
- Requiring that masks be worn in all common areas, and when meeting with other staff. As of March 11, 2022, the PHO removed its requirement that masks be worn in indoor spaces. Wearing masks in Township facilities will be optional after this date; and,
- Requiring that all staff perform a daily health check before entering their workplace.

During the next phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Township will continue to take direction from the Provincial and Regional Health Officers who, under Provincial legislation, are delegated the responsibility and authority to protect public health.

On May 25, 2021, the Province announced a 4-step reopening plan, with steps to move us back to our pre-pandemic life, provided case counts and hospitalizations continued to decline, and more than 70% of our population was vaccinated. The Province is currently in step three of the four stage plan and has not yet moved to the fourth and final step. The Province will not proceed to the next step until it is safe to do so based on guidance from the Public Health Officer and the latest available data.

The Township is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for its employees, clients, and residents and this document outlines the steps the organization has or will be taking in order to suppress the transmission rate of COVID-19 at Municipal Hall. This Safety Plan can be found on our website at <https://www.esquimalt.ca/community-events/news/covid-19-information> and staff can access it through the Occupational Health and Safety Page on the Township's intranet.

Step 1: Assess Risks in the Workplace

The new variant, Omicron, spreads via aerosol and it has been documented that this variant is much more contagious than other variants of the COVID-19 virus.

Each Director conducted COVID-19 risk assessments to determine the level of risk to employees during their workday. The risk assessment looks at all elements of the work including:

- Proximity to others;
- Masks in the workplace - are not required to be worn by staff as of March 11, 2022, but are optional;
- Ability for workers to maintain physical distancing;
- Identifying common areas where people gather and outlining the maximum number of people who can be in a common area at the same time. This will be updated as the Provincial Health Officer's requirement to physically distance is eliminated;
- Ability to limit or reduce in-person meetings;
- Steps to take if members of the public have access to the work space; and,
- Identifying necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).

Staff working at the Municipal Hall are lower risk for serious illness if they contract COVID-19 as a result of the mandatory vaccination policy that was introduced in November 2021 and came into effect January 10, 2022. Positions that have increased interaction with the public have a higher risk of infection.

Step 2: Implement Protocols to Reduce the Risk

Employer Responsibilities:

- Ensure that all employees perform a daily health check before entering their workplace;
- Ensure that workers have the ability to maintain physical distancing until such time that there is no longer a requirement to do so, and have staff work from home a certain percentage of the time to help reduce the number of staff in the facilities;
- Review employee workstations or work space to ensure there is 2 metres between (in instances where there are no physical barriers), and that staff can effectively physically distance themselves, including when in vehicles, until such time that there is no longer a requirement to do so;
- Changes have been made to eliminate the need for staff to walk by workstations without the 2-metre distancing requirement (e.g., moving printers or providing other printers when the workstation was occupied);
- Provide staff with access to hand sanitizer;
- Provide staff with access to PPE as required or requested;
- Place posters in washrooms and over sinks outlining effective hand washing techniques;
- Provide disinfectant spray or wipes in common rooms such that users can spray/wipe down after use;
- Plexi-glass barriers have been installed at the Finance counter in order to protect staff and the public from the possible transmission of the COVID-19 virus;
- Staff have been provided with instructions and tools to conduct virtual meetings;

- Processes have been created to deal with possible COVID-19 exposure in the workplace (outlined below);
- Provide timely training and communication to staff regarding rules and guidelines pertaining to COVID-19;
- Post signage indicating that employees, contractors, or visitors exhibiting COVID-like symptoms are not allowed to enter any of our facilities; and,
- Post other applicable signage for staff and the public to ensure all other protocols are adhered to.

Employee Responsibilities:

- Learn and follow all applicable policies and procedures;
- Masks in the workplace are not required to be worn by staff as of March 11, 2022, but are optional;
- No physical contact between individuals, including hand shaking;
- Practice good hygiene including frequent hand washing and avoiding touching your face;
- Keep work environment clean using appropriate products to clean and disinfect items including desk, work surfaces, phone, keyboard;
- Maintain physical distancing;
- If employee has any COVID-19 symptoms including a cough, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat or fatigue, they must:
 - Stay home;
 - Call 8-1-1 and follow their direction;
 - Not return to the workplace until after 5 days has lapsed since they first developed symptoms, and they no longer have any symptoms.
- If an employee comes to work with these symptoms they will be sent home unless they have confirmation from a doctor that the symptoms are not contagious (e.g., hay fever);
- If employees have the risk of more severe illness (over the age of 60 or compromised immune systems) they must speak with their Manager who will, with the assistance of medical professionals, determine risk and extra precautions that need to be met; and,
- Report any unsafe conditions or acts to their Supervisor.

Step 3: Policies and Processes

The Township has recently developed and implemented a Working from Home Policy during COVID-19 in order to limit the number of people working in our facilities.

The Township also implemented a COVID Policy. The purpose of this policy is to clarify expectations regarding attending work, absences from work, and reporting requirements related to COVID-19.

As of January 10, 2022, all employees must be fully vaccinated in order to work for the Township, as reflected in the Township's COVID-19 Vaccination Policy.

The Township has reviewed Provincial Health regulations and orders, and staff need to self-isolate if they develop symptoms for a minimum of five days, and until symptoms subside.

Processes Regarding Public Access:

Council and Committee Meetings:

- Effective February 28, 2022 there are no capacity restrictions for Council and Committee meetings;
- Masks are not required as of March 11, 2022, but are optional; and,
- Processes have been developed and are available on our website so the public are aware of these updated processes during the pandemic.

Public Access:

- Effective February 23, 2022, Municipal Hall will be open to the public 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday through Friday;
- Members of the public may attend the public areas of the Municipal Hall: front counter, 2nd Floor Administration, 3rd floor Reception, and Wurtele Room to conduct business and to make payments;
- Washrooms will re-open for public use;
- Members of the public are not required to wear a mask while inside Municipal Hall; they are optional; and;
- Signage is posted in public areas requesting that persons who are sick not enter the building.

Visitors, Contractors, and Committee Members

- All Contractors and Committee members are required to complete an attestation that they are fully vaccinated. The attestation must be with the individual at all times while inside municipal hall or meeting with municipal staff. An attestation can be filled out each visit if necessary; and,
- Visitors and residents may have access to public areas (e.g., foyer, front counter, reception areas, elevator, stairwells, washrooms) without a requirement to complete a vaccination attestation.

Step 4: Develop Communications Plan and Training

Employer Responsibilities:

- Ensure all staff receive training and have access to policies and plans on:
 - The risk of exposure to COVID-19, and the signs and symptoms of the disease;
 - The risk controls, protocols, and checklists referred to in this plan;
 - Location of hand washing stations;
 - Proper use of PPE (for specific individuals);
 - How to report an exposure to, or symptoms of COVID-19;
 - The Township's COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination Policy; and,
 - Ensure Municipal Hall's Occupational Health and Safety Committee is involved in the review of Safety Plans, with recommendations from the Committee forwarded to management for review.

Employee Responsibilities:

- Attend training and follow policies and procedures;
- Report unsafe practices to management first, and then to the applicable Occupational Health and Safety Committee; and,
- Show proof of vaccination as required by policy to Director.

Step 5: Monitor and Update Plans as Necessary

Employer Responsibilities:

- Review policies and plans periodically with staff;
- Update plans as necessary; and,
- Ensure Municipal Hall's Occupational Health and Safety Committee is involved in the review.

Employee Responsibilities:

- Report unsafe work conditions to your supervisor; and,
- Provide feedback on plans, policies, and procedures to your supervisor.

Step 6: Assess and Address Risks from Resuming Operation

The Township has continued operations throughout the pandemic and have reviewed and adhered to the recommended steps necessary to resume operations. All staff will receive training on updated plans, procedures, and protocols.

RESOURCES

- BC Centre for Disease Control: www.bccdc.ca
- Provincial Health Services Authority: www.phsa.ca
- Health Canada: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

- BC Construction Safety Alliance: www.bccsa.ca
- Health Canada: [Public health management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- WorkSafeBC: www.worksafebc.com